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ABSTRACT

Scarce resources, changing customer expectation, and the changing role of top management are all factors that have contributed to the implementation of total quality management (TQM) in libraries. Instructional articles, conferences, and videos can alleviate some concerns of cost and time commitment. Many libraries already practice some of the techniques of TQM, including an emphasis on good customer service, staff participation in decision making, and investigating user needs and levels of satisfaction, but do not have systematic methods for insuring that these things happen as a matter of course. TQM, perhaps with slight modifications tailored to specific library settings, can provide such methods. Among other things, those designing the program must keep in mind that starting small and simple is a good idea, that TQM should not be used as a panacea for personnel problems or for a sick organization in general, that teams should be made up of people who actually do the tasks and have ownership in the results, and that some staff will dislike the hype surrounding TQM and the application of business practices to a library setting. The hallmark tools in TQM include teams, customer surveys, flow charts and diagrams, and data. Brief details of experiences with TQM at Oregon State University are incorporated into the discussion. (BEW)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

# TQM — WILL IT WORK IN YOUR LIBRARY?

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## WHY ARE LIBRARIES USING TQM?

Total Quality Management, Quality Management, Continuous Improvement — whatever the label you choose, it is changing how libraries do business. Why is this so?

- **Scarce Resources.** Libraries have fewer resources available to them today then they have had in the past. At the same time libraries are facing a demand for more and additional services.

- **Changing Customer Expectation.** Our users want more and they want it at their convenience. Technology is changing who our users are and how they access our collections. Whether access is from an office or dorm on campus, from a distance education site or from across the country, library users want access. They want delivery and they need training.

- **Changing Role of Top Management.** The role of top management is changing dramatically. We are moving from hierarchical organizations to what Peter Senge calls "learning organizations."[1] How do we create and sustain such an organization?

## TQM AT OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY

For many of these reasons, Oregon State University began learning about and implementing Total Quality Management on campus in 1989. The university went into TQM in a very traditional manner starting with a series of training sessions for the President and his cabinet and continuing training down through the organization to the Academic Deans Council and from there to the colleges and departments.

In 1990, the library had its first introduction to Total Quality when Ed Coat, then University Vice President for Finance and Administration, did an hour presentation at a library staff meeting. Library reaction ranged from mildly interested to dismay that the university was embarking on one more management fad. However, Library Administration was interested and decided to undertake a three-day TQM training/orientation session. This session included the Director of Libraries, the three Assistant University Librarians and the eight library Division heads. Our intent was determine if there was something about TQM which we could use in our library.

Although we were by no means in agreement about the applicability of TQM to a library setting, we had enough agreement to be willing to support some trial teams. Using as a starting point the critical issues which had been set forth in the training session, two teams in Public Services were defined. I have detailed the experience of these teams elsewhere so I will simply say we started pretty raw and learned a lot as we worked our way through the TQM processes as set forth at Oregon State University.[2]

## IS IMPLEMENTING TQM ALWAYS EXPENSIVE?

Although the two teams we started with at Oregon State were able to implement solutions which have improved library service, the cost in staff time seemed too

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high. Time was spent to train the team leader, an outside facilitator was always used and staff met regularly for two hours per week for almost a year. Although the immediate supervisors approved the time away from the work unit, the team members felt incredible pressure to keep up with their work flow.

In talking with other libraries, I have learned that many librarians wanting to explore using TQM tools in their libraries were nervous about doing so because they believe they did not have adequate resources to do so. At Oregon State University, we have a full-time TQM trainer and the expertise of many faculty and staff to draw from. Many libraries are not as fortunate. Even in my library, faculty and staff are reluctant to embrace TQM because they fear they cannot commit time to it.

Many small businesses have already been struggling with this problem and have found ways to implement those procedures, principles, and tools of TQM which they believed would benefit their business. For TQM to truly change how we do business in librarianship, we can and must make similar adaptations. Someone in the organization needs to understand the basic concept behind quality management and to be responsible for learning the tools, teaching others and guiding the team process. This need not be a lifetime or even full-time commitment. In addition to articles and conference, there are many good videos available for instruction. Moreover, there are also many libraries and businesses using quality management tools who can act as resources.

## WHAT CAN A LIBRARY DO?

A library seeking to use TQM must first have top level support for making change. Next the library should provide resources for someone on staff to read about and attend workshops on quality management. Most libraries are already using many of the techniques of quality improvement. They realize the importance of providing good customer service and of encouraging staff participation in decision making. What is lacking in many libraries is a systematic method for insuring that these things happen as a matter of course. Few libraries have ongoing mechanism for measuring user satisfaction or exploring user needs; library employees have limited responsibility for resolving customer complaints. Finally, libraries often do not have well defined processes with clear areas of responsibility — thus making it difficult to determine who can change what. This can lead to situations where customer needs and library resources are no longer in synch.

TQM can offer libraries a systematic method for examining and changing the ways in which they do business. It can help libraries better utilize staffing and financial resources in order to provide continuously improved service. Moreover, a systematic approach to problem solving involving all staff at all levels can aid in removing the guesswork from decision making. Decisions are data driven. Teams using TQM tools understand how they reached a solution and they know what to change if the solution they implement does not work. Part of the empowerment of TQM comes with the demystification and standardization of the decision making process.

## HOW CAN TQM BE MODIFIED?

Calvin Boyer in his book *Scholarship Revisited* [3] notes that scholarship includes the scholarship of application. As librarians we have a role to play in reconceptualizing quality management as it is practiced in business and even in the rest of the university and apply it to a library setting. We need to determine what Deming was trying to accomplish for business and

incorporate those ideas into our work. Furthermore, in order to bring the ideals of quality management to everyone in the profession, we need to determine how libraries with smaller staffs and/or limited resources can take advantage of the TQM problem solving methodology.

## SOME CAUTIONS

TQM takes a lot of time so it is best to start small. TQM is not appropriate for solving personnel issues. TQM is a tool for continuous improvement. It is not a panacea for a sick organization. TQM teams must be cautioned against "knowing the answer" at the onset. Finally, teams must be made up those people who do the work. A team member with no ownership in the results can hinder the entire team.

## SOME LESSONS

The jargon of TQM is offensive to some people; do not spend much time trying to change their minds. Some library staff can not accept that business practices could be applied to an academic setting. Everyone worries about finding time in an already busy schedule — this is where support and reassurance from management comes in. Keep it simple and keep the teams small. Cross-departmental teams are hard to manage. Someone on the team or working with the team must fully understand the basic steps to follow in order to implement continuous improvement. Some employees dislike the hype of TQM and will want to avoid using it.

## WORDS OF ADVICE

While it is possible to modify quality management tools to fit a particular library, it is critical that the essentials of the TQM problem solving model be thoroughly understood before undertaking modifications. A basic concept of quality management is that processes are analyzed and measured, that the customer is a primary partner in decision making and that decision making must happen at the team level. Any changes to TQM must incorporate these ideas.

## USEFUL TQM TOOLS

An examination of the OSU TQM teams and some investigation into the TQM tools used by small businesses leads me to conclude that libraries should include the following components any application of quality management. All teams should use the following TQM problem solving tools.

1. **Teams.** Teams are basic to implementing quality management. Most teams will need help. If there is a place to spend money for outside help, this is the place to do it. TQM depends on employees working in teams. Team building exercises can help turn a group of people into a functioning team. Such exercises should include, among other things, discussion on team responsibilities; how the team will run itself; how the team will reach decisions; how the team will handle differing opinions and how the team will report its decisions. Teams also must be provided with a clear focus. What does the team sponsor want to accomplish. Finally, the team needs to believe that management will support them through the TQM process. Clarity of expectations is a must.

2. **Customer Survey.** Every team should start with a customer survey. This need not be elaborate but the team has to determine if the problem set forth by the sponsor is truly a problem for the library user. Once this information has been gathered, the team should identify what seems to be the major contributor to the problem. This can easily be done with the Pareto chart which graphically illustrated that 20 percent of the problems result in 80 percent of customer

dissatisfaction.

**3. Flow Chart and Diagram.** Once the team has identified two or three problems, they can flow chart the process. The flow chart will show them what is currently happening with a process. At this point, the team may be able to move ahead with some obvious fixes. If this is the case, the team should do so. This idea of "picking the low hanging fruit" not only corrects obvious problems but is also an encouragement for the team.

The next step is to look at those problems with less obvious solutions and diagram the causes. A fishbone diagram will help the team to consider and reconsider how a process might be changed. This technique is an effective method for getting the team to go deeper than the obvious solutions.

**4. Data.** Once the team has identified probable causes and solutions to a problem, it must have data. Data allows the team to measure what has gone before and how to measure the results on any solutions which are implemented. This part of the TQM process can be time consuming and confusing. Each library must identify its important measures, what data it wants to collect and how to collect it. Knowing this information will keep a team on track.

Statistical gathering is important for benchmarking which allows a library to compare its performance with that of another library or other organization. As a profession we are still new to benchmarking but as more libraries measure their processes we will have useful comparators.

Finally, a team will implement solution and continue to check to determine if the solution is solving the problem. If it is not, they will go back to the data and if it is, they will move on to the next problem.

## CONCLUSION

All libraries can learn about and use these tools. Although a first team may be slow going once the TQM process has been gone through and staff understand how to use it, the library has a very powerful means for decision making. Committees and taskforces can easily incorporate the basic TQM tools into their decision-making model. At Oregon State University, we have had over 130 TQM teams. In the library we have had two teams which went through a rigorous TQM process. We have had several processes which we used TQM methods to improve. These have been in both Technical Services and Public Services. We are currently having a team look at a process, document delivery between the main campus library and the coast branch, which is unusual in that our external customers are satisfied with the service but out internal ones, e.g., staff in the two locations, are not. Even where we are not calling it "TQM" we use the TQM methodology especially the customer survey, flow charting, and data gathering. Resources, both financial and people, are allocated in a manner which addresses user needs efficiently and effectively. As decision making moves away from management to those doing the work, library management has more time to look for solutions to those issues which can not be solved through TQM.

A library choosing to implement TQM should do so because that library is truly desirous of moving to a decision-making model based on data, employee involvement, and customer input. Remember that TQM is not an end unto itself, but simply a set of tools with the potential to help libraries become more responsive organizations and to utilize resources in the most effective manner possible. It is not a cure-all and it should not be a burden to library staff. Total

Quality Management, Quality Management, Continuous Improvement — they are simply one of the many management tools available to us. There is, alas, no simple or quick fix.

## NOTES

[1] Senge, Peter M. *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization.* New York: Doubleday Currency.

[2] Jurow, Susan and Susan B. Barnard, editors. *Integrating Total Quality Management in a Library Setting.* The Hawthorne Press, Inc. 1993

[3] Boyer, Calvin. *Scholarship Revisited; Priorities of the Professoriate.* Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. 1991.